



John Tavener: Glimpses of Paradise

Geoffrey Haydon

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Published in the year of his 50th birthday, this is a biography of the British composer John Tavener, whose "The Protecting Veil" brought him a second wave of popularity. He first came to prominence in 1968 with "The Whale", a dramatic setting of the Jonah story for spectacular forces, including Hammond organ, amplified metronomes, exotic percussion, and actors with loudhailers. He attracted the attention of society hostesses and gossip columnists, and was regularly seen as the escort of Mia Farrow, but the gulf between the public and the private man began to widen. In 1977, at a time of personal crisis, he was received into the Orthodox faith, and during the 1980s he was increasingly drawn to the mysteries of Byzantium, turning for guidance to Mother Thekla, an Orthodox nun who became his librettist. The book draws on conversations with Tavener's family, friends and colleagues, and Tavener himself, tracking his spiritual journey and exploring the apparent paradoxes of his character. The author has made two films about Tavener, the second of which won the Indies Award for the best music and arts programme of 1992.

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